

86TH CONGRESS
1ST SESSION

H. R. 5243

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

MARCH 4, 1959

Mr. FOGARTY introduced the following bill; which was referred to the Committee on Education and Labor

A BILL

To establish a temporary Presidential commission to study and to report on problems related to blindness and the needs of blind persons, and for other purposes.

1 *Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representa-*
2 *tives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,*

3 FINDINGS AND DECLARATION OF PURPOSE

4 SECTION 1. (a) The Congress recognizes that there are
5 about three hundred and fifty thousand blind persons in the
6 United States; that the number in ten years can be expected
7 to be in excess of four hundred thousand; that many blind
8 people do not have the opportunity to achieve full independ-
9 ence in their personal lives or to participate actively in keep-
10 ing with their potential abilities in the economic, social,

1 cultural, and educational life of the Nation; that this condi-
2 tion exists despite expenditure of public funds over a period
3 of many years to remedy such conditions; and that, con-
4 sequently, there is need for further study and evaluation of
5 programs and activities conducted in behalf of blind persons
6 to determine what contributions to their welfare are being
7 made and, in the light of present and future social, tech-
8 nological, and scientific developments, what contributions
9 can be made to their welfare and to the better realization of
10 their potential abilities, thus advancing also the general wel-
11 fare and economy of the Nation.

12 (b) It is hereby declared to be the purpose of the Con-
13 gress to assist in creating a national atmosphere for the de-
14 velopment of a positive role for, and wider acceptance of,
15 blind persons in our modern society by providing for a
16 thorough study and evaluation of the needs and potentiali-
17 ties of blind persons and problems of a socio-economic na-
18 ture engendered by and related to blindness, as well as the
19 extent and character of Federal tax-supported programs
20 and activities designed to insure the solution of these prob-
21 lems and the meeting of these needs, present and future.

1 ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL STUDY COMMIS-
2 SION ON POTENTIALITIES AND PROBLEMS OF BLIND
3 PERSONS

4 SEC. 2. There is hereby established a Presidential Study
5 Commission on Potentialities and Problems of the Blind
6 (hereinafter in this Act referred to as the "Commission").

7 COMPOSITION OF THE COMMISSION

8 SEC. 3. (a) The Commission shall consist of nine mem-
9 bers appointed by the President from among widely recog-
10 nized leaders in private life, public life, and the pertinent
11 professions who can contribute materially to the proper
12 carrying out of the intent and purposes of this Act as set
13 forth in section 1 and section 4. The President shall design-
14 ate one of the members to serve as Chairman.

15 (b) Five members of the Commission shall constitute
16 a quorum.

17 FUNCTIONS OF THE COMMISSION

18 SEC. 4. (a) The Commission shall acquaint itself with
19 established and accepted standards of existing services for
20 the advancement of blind persons, shall evaluate and deter-
21 mine the adequacy and suitability of such existing standards,

1 and shall propose standards in those areas of service in which
2 none exist. Study, evaluation, and formulation of standards
3 designed to carry out the spirit and intent of this Act shall
4 be made with particular attention to—

5 (1) the structure, scope, and administration of the
6 laws of the United States providing for expenditure of
7 Federal public funds, in whole or in part, on programs
8 and activities, national, regional, or State, for blind
9 persons;

10 (2) appraisal of the quantity and quality of all
11 services, programs and activities for blind persons, other
12 than medical research, which are supported in whole or
13 in part by Federal funds, specifically including the
14 following:

15 (A) provisions for the education of preschool
16 and school-age blind children;

17 (B) prevocational and nonvocational rehabilita-
18 tion programs, including rehabilitation to the point
19 of self-care, and rehabilitation centers;

20 (C) vocational rehabilitation programs, includ-
21 ing rehabilitation centers, employment services, in-
22 dustrial homework programs, workshops, and busi-
23 ness enterprises;

24 (D) books for the blind in raised print and re-

1 corded form and library services, including problems
2 of procurement and distribution;

3 (E) basic and supplemental social service pro-
4 grams for meeting the total needs of a blind person
5 and his family;

6 (F) public welfare programs, such as disability
7 insurance and public assistance;

8 (G) nonmedical aspects of optical aids and pre-
9 vention of blindness programs;

10 (H) social and technological research needed
11 now and in the future to carry out the spirit and
12 intent of this Act;

13 (I) appraisal of professional caliber and train-
14 ing of personnel providing services to blind persons
15 in programs covered by this Act; and

16 (J) other services, programs, and activities
17 within the provisions of this Act deemed appropriate
18 by the Commission for study, evaluation, and for-
19 mulation of standards.

20 (b) The Commission shall report the results of its
21 studies to the President and to the Congress not later than
22 thirty months after the date of enactment of this Act, such
23 final report to include recommendations for appropriate ac-

tion, including legislation, specifically designed to support the spirit and intent of this Act. The Commission may also make such earlier progress reports to the President and the Congress as it may deem appropriate.

COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF THE COMMISSION

SEC. 5. (a) Any member of the Commission who is an officer or employee of the United States shall serve without compensation in addition to that received for his services as an officer or employee of the United States; but he shall be reimbursed for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred by him in the performance of duties vested in the Commission.

(b) Any member of the Commission who is not an officer or employee of the United States shall receive \$50 per diem when engaged in the performance of duties vested in the Commission, plus reimbursement for travel, subsistence, and other necessary expenses incurred by him in the performance of such duties.

STAFF OF THE COMMISSION

SEC. 6. (a) The Chairman shall, without regard to the civil service or classification laws, appoint and fix the compensation of an Executive Director.

(b) The Chairman shall, without regard to the civil service or classification laws, appoint and fix the compensa-

1 tion of such other personnel as may be necessary to carry
2 out the provisions of this Act.

3 (c) For the purposes of carrying out the provisions of
4 this Act, the Chairman may, with the advice and consent
5 of the Commission, appoint to the Commission staff, persons
6 employed by recognized organizations and agencies serving
7 blind persons, such persons to serve the Commission without
8 compensation except for reimbursement of travel, subsistence,
9 and other necessary expenses incurred by them in the per-
10 formance of their duties on behalf of the Commission.

11 POWERS AND PROCEDURES OF THE COMMISSION

12 SEC. 7. (a) The Commission, or any member so author-
13 ized by the Chairman, may, for the purpose of carrying out
14 the provisions of this Act, hold such hearings and sit and
15 act at such times and places and take such testimony as the
16 Commission or the Chairman may deem advisable. Any
17 member of the Commission may administer oaths or affirma-
18 tions to witnesses appearing before the Commission or before
19 any duly authorized member thereof.

20 (b) The Commission, or any member so authorized by
21 the Chairman, may visit and observe activities and programs
22 within the scope of this Act designed to serve blind persons.

23 (c) The Commission, or any member so authorized by
24 the Chairman, is authorized to secure directly from any de-

1 partment or agency of the Federal Government such infor-
2 mation and assistance, not inconsistent with the provisions
3 of any Federal law, as it finds necessary to carry out the
4 provisions of this Act; and each such Federal department
5 or agency is authorized and directed to furnish such infor-
6 mation and assistance.

7 (d) The Commission, or any member so authorized by
8 the Chairman, may invite individuals as well as organiza-
9 tions and agencies, both governmental and voluntary, to sub-
10 mit in writing, either in lieu of or in conjunction with oral
11 presentations, their views on services, programs, activities,
12 and other matters within the scope of this Act.

13 (e) At the direction of the Chairman and under the
14 supervision of the Executive Director, the staff of the Com-
15 mission shall prepare preliminary working documents deal-
16 ing in detail with various aspects of the study provided for
17 in section 4 of this Act for the use of the Commission in
18 the preparation of its final report.

19 (f) The Commission, or any member so authorized by
20 the Chairman, shall have power to have printing and binding
21 done and to make such expenditures deemed advisable by
22 the Commission within the amount appropriated under
23 authority of this Act.

1 APPROPRIATION AUTHORIZATION

2 SEC. 8. There is hereby authorized to be appropriated
3 the sum of \$450,000 to carry out the provisions of this Act.

4 TERMINATION OF THE COMMISSION

5 SEC. 9. The Commission shall cease to exist within
6 thirty days after submitting to the President and to the Con-
7 gress its final report made in accordance with the provisions
8 of section 4 of this Act.